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Government Computer News

NIST scraps 220 of its paper forms

BY PREETI VASISHTHA | GCN STAFF

▶ THE ENTERPRISE The National Institute of Standards and Technology this month did away with shuttling paper forms and folders from office to office.

“The e-Approval project is automating all administrative business processes,” said Kevin Inman, NIST’s director of the project. “We fill up forms electronically, digitally sign them and route them electronically.”

About 220 forms, which NIST uses frequently and include personnel forms, standard forms, leave slips and pay vouchers, have been converted to electronic ones, Inman said.

The move to electronic forms will help alleviate delays because the agency has widespread offices on large campuses in Gaithersburg, Md., and Boulder, Colo., Inman said. Paper forms had to be signed and mailed to Boulder and sometimes sent back to Gaithersburg for further action.

“Work that used to take days is now done within minutes with significant cost savings,” he said.

“We fill up forms electronically, digitally sign them and route them electronically.”

Digital signatures

NIST awarded a contract in April 2000 to Materials, Communication and Computers Inc. of Alexandria, Va., to create the e-Approval system. The deployment of the application began earlier this month.

MatCom used Entrust Enterprise User ID 5.1 from Entrust of Plano, Texas, for digital signatures and encryption on forms and Entrust Express Eudora 5.1 for digital signatures and encryption within e-mail.

To devise the new process, MatCom used HandySoft BizFlow 2000 from HandySoft Corp. of Falls Church, Va.

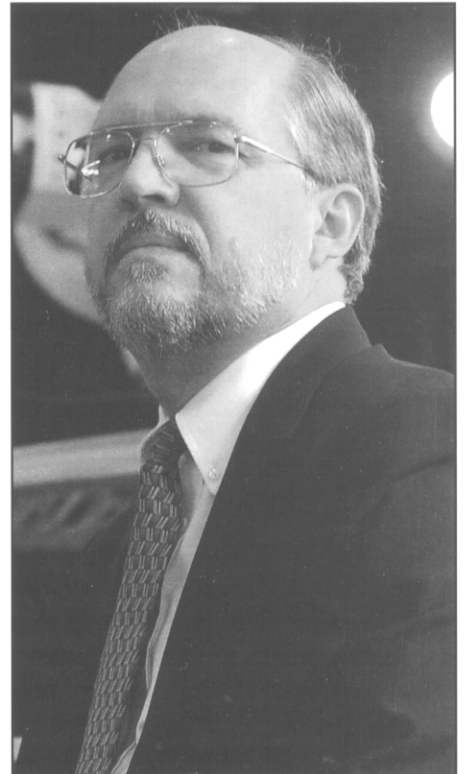
The workflow automation suite lets NIST convert paper forms to an electronic format and create electronic routing based on the agency’s business processes. The software taps workflow data stowed in existing NIST Oracle Corp. databases.

The NIST users, which include scientists, engineers and administrative staff are tak-

ing training courses on how to use the new system, Inman said.

The system’s smart feature automatically fills in some parts of forms and identifies the likely next recipients of forms, he said.

Under the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, all agencies must move to electronic information exchange by October 2003. ■



NIST has seen significant cuts in task time and costs, Kevin Inman says.